



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Japanese cherry blossom trees will bloom in St Petersburg

St Petersburg, May 06, 2013 – A real Japanese cherry blossom (Sakura) tree garden will appear in St Petersburg's Peter the Great Botanical Garden under support of JTI (JT Group) Company. During the official ceremony to take place on May 11, JT Group and JTI representatives with attendance of the Consul General of Japan in St Petersburg Yoshihiro Yamamura will provide the Botanical Garden's specialists with 150 saplings of this most beautiful tree.

The Japanese cherry blossom tree garden will occupy the area of approximately 2,500 sq. m. The trees will be planted as an alley along the perimeter of the Japanese garden in the Botanical Garden. At present, the saplings are at special plant houses, where they are adapting after a lengthy trip from Japan. Outdoor planting of the first sets of saplings will begin as early as this spring.

JTI, with participation by its parent company, Japan Tobacco (JT) implemented the project to create a Japanese cherry blossom tree garden in St Petersburg's Botanical Garden.

"We gladly supported the proposal of the Botanical Garden to create a Sakura alley. The company actively participated in this project – jointly with the Botanical Garden's representatives and representatives of JT, our parent company, we selected the most beautiful and frost-hardy varieties, such as Kanzan, Beni-Yutaka, and Kushiro-Aye. Let us hope that all saplings do well and delight visitors to the Botanical Garden every spring," said **Kiyoshi Iwai**, JTI's Japan Affairs Director.

Yuri Kalugin, deputy director of the Botanical Garden, shared that the Japanese cherry blossom trees have been grown especially for St Petersburg on northern Japanese islands by farmer Kagetsu Noen. In addition to being cold-tolerant, Japanese cherry blossom trees of these varieties are distinguished by unusual flowers of deep pink and red colors. They bloom even before the leaves appear. According to calculations by the Botanical Garden's specialists, St Petersburg residents will be able to admire them every year from the end of April to the beginning of May.

Creating a Japanese cherry blossom tree garden is not the first charitable project for JTI related to supporting Japanese culture in Russia. Under support of JTI the Japanese garden and the Tea Pavilion have been built in St Petersburg Botanical Garden. The restoration of Japanese warriors' armor was performed at the State Hermitage Museum; the largest in Russia online gallery of Japanese prints dating from the XVIII–XIX centuries was created at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts; and festivals and exhibitions of modern and classic Japanese art are being held annually in Moscow and St Petersburg.

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Japan Tobacco International (JTI), a subsidiary of Japan Tobacco Group, is a leading tobacco manufacturer in Russia and one of the largest foreign philanthropists. Preserving Russia's cultural heritage, popularizing Japanese art, and supporting projects in the area of international cultural collaboration, as well as supporting the elderly and the veterans are a priority area of JTI's social policy.

For many years, the company has been supporting the leading Russian museums and theaters, including the State Hermitage Museum, the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, the Bolshoi Theatre, the Mariinsky Theatre, the Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre, and the Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow.

Major projects include restoring Strasser's "Great Clock" and exhibits to establish the Fabergé Museum at the State Hermitage Museum; restoring *Satyr at the Peasant's House*, a painting by Jacob Jordaens, and digitizing collections of paintings and artwork at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts; establishing a multimedia library at the Chekhov Moscow Art Theatre, supporting exhibitions of modern art at Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, and many others.

Long-term programs in the area of social integration of the elderly, the veterans, and the people with disabilities are a key area of JTI's charitable activities. Within the scope of these projects, computer classrooms, where over 5,000 elderly residents of both capitals have received training, had been opened in St Petersburg and Moscow. During "Silver Spring" and "Autumn of Hope" annual charity programs, more than ten thousand retirees in Moscow, St Petersburg, Lipetsk, and Yelets attend concerts and performances with featuring famous entertainers, as well as arts and crafts master classes and dance clubs. "Nobody is Forgotten" program is dedicated to providing assistance to thousands of veterans and workers on the home front in major cities of Central Russia.